

VZCZCXRO6350

PP RUEHAO RUEHCD RUEHGA RUEHGD RUEHHA RUEHHO RUEHMC RUEHMT RUEHNG  
RUEHNL RUEHQU RUEHRD RUEHRG RUEHRS RUEHTM RUEHVC

DE RUEHUB #0963/01 3642047

ZNY CCCCC ZZH

P 292047Z DEC 08

FM USINT HAVANA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3990

INFO RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS PRIORITY

RUCOGCA/NAVSTA GUANTANAMO BAY CU PRIORITY

RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RHMFSS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RHMFSS/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY

RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RUCOWCV/CCGDSEVEN MIAMI FL PRIORITY

RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3991

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HAVANA 000963

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR WHA/CCA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/23/2018

TAGS: [CU](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS ROUND UP DECEMBER 2008

Classified By: COM: Jonathan Farrar: For reasons 1.4 b/d

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: On December 10, Cuban state security moved to prevent many activists from marking the 60th anniversary of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The police detained at least 80 pro-democracy activists. All were released without charges within 24 hours. Because of detentions, protesters were unable to mount a planned march organized by Dr. Darsi Ferrer in front of the UNESCO building. However, the organization of wives and relatives of political prisoners, Damas de Blanco, held without incident a march in the center of Havana. In an unusual move, the Cuban government held a seminar marking the occasion that included participants from the US and several Latin American countries. USINT held a well attended event that included presentations by many of Cuba's leading dissidents as well as representatives of other organizations. End Summary.

12. (U) The Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National Reconciliation (CCDHRN) confirmed that 80 dissidents were detained by police in various parts of the country in order to prevent them from attending activities commemorating the 60th anniversary of the adoption of Universal Declaration of Human Rights. All of those detained were released without charges, mostly within 24 hours. The GOC stopped Dr. Darsi Ferrer, as well as members of such organization as the Commission for Attention to Political Prisoners and Their Families and the Cuban Liberal Movement (MLC), from organizing a planned march in front of the UNESCO building. Dr. Ferrer has held marches at the same location for the past several years that have never attracted more than fifteen participants. On December 11, Poloff saw Dr. Ferrer who stated that he was detained on December 10 at 8:00 AM in front of his house and held at a police station until 7:00 PM that evening.

13. (C) Belinda Salas of the Federation of Latin American Rural Women (FLAMUR) released a statement to the international press saying that on December 9 police brutally beat her, her husband and two others as they left the USINT building. Ms. Salas stated that she was left unconscious on the street while the others were detained. On December 11 Poloff met with Belinda's husband, Lazaro Joaquin Alonso Roman. He stated that he was held overnight and then released without charges. His wrist was bandaged and his lower lip was swollen. However, in the evening of December 10 Poloff

saw Ms. Salas at a USINT activity with no visible sign of the injuries she had described in her press statements.

14. (U) On December 10 32 members of Damas de Blanco (Ladies in White), a movement composed of the wives and relatives of political prisoners, held without interference a march to the Capitol building in central Havana, an area heavily frequented by tourists. The marchers passed out Cuban flags and copies of the UDHR. Earlier in the day, the Damas attempted to ascend the steps to the University of Havana but were prevented from doing so by pro-government activists. According to Damas' spokesperson Laura Pollan the activists blocked the way, but in contrast with the past, did not hurl insults at the Damas or otherwise try to molest them.

15. (U) On December 10 police detained several dissidents, including Guillermo Farinas and Jorge Luis Garcia Perez ("Antunez"), to prevent them from attending an event organized by the unity organization Agenda for Transition at the home of Vladimiro Roca. Agenda's spokesperson, Martha Beatriz Roque, told USINT that a tight police cordon surrounded Roca's house for five blocks. However, 29 opposition members out of the 81 invited, as well as representatives of the British, Canadian and Dutch embassies and members of the international press, attended the event.

16. (U) On December 10, in an unexpected move, the GOC held a seminar to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the UDHR. Several participants from the US, including anti-war activist Cindy Sheehan and other guests from Latin American countries, attended the workshops. Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque stated that no country is perfect but stated that Cuba

HAVANA 00000963 002 OF 002

had made significant advances in "civil and political rights, and in social, economic and cultural rights." The seminar ended with the participants making the GOC's usual demands for the ending of the US embargo and the freeing of five Cubans convicted of espionage in the US. However, the fact that the meeting was held at all is unusual considering that the police have frequently arrested people for merely distributing copies of the UDHR. The event was held at the Havana Convention Palace, a short distance from the COM residence, where USINT's own commemoration was being held at the same time.

17. (C) At that event 25 people from various organizations each gave a short presentation on the continued relevance of each of the 30 articles of the UDHR. Only three of the scheduled presenters failed to appear, two of them being Darsi Ferrer and Jorge Luis Garcia Perez ("Antunez"), who were detained. Among the presenters were leading figures in the dissident movement including Oswaldo Paya; Francisco Chaviano, political prisoner for thirteen years; Elsa Morejon, wife of political prisoner Dr. Oscar Biscet; Rene Gomez Manzano, opposition lawyer; and Elizardo Sanchez, president of CCDHRN. The event was well attended although only a few of the invitees from the diplomatic community, mainly from Eastern European and African countries, came. At least one person (Dr. Hilda Molina) stated that state security prevented her from attending the event. Several US students participating in educational exchange programs in Cuba attended and participated in the activity.

18. (SBU) On December 12 USINT hosted the second open mike concert with more than 15 Cuban groups performing. The groups encompassed a wide range of styles including traditional Cuban music, dance, rap and reggaeton. About 150 people attended, about 20% of whom were members of opposition groups, and about 80% young people who had never before attended a USINT activity. Those in attendance as well as many of the performers came from poor, marginal neighborhoods such as Regla and Arroyo Naranjo. Some rock groups, including the controversial punk rock band, Porno Para

Ricardo, which had performed at the first open mike concert, dropped out of the event, at the last moment out of fear of reprisals. Gorki Aguilar, singer for Porno Para Ricardo, came to watch the concert. USINT personnel handed out free T-shirts to the crowd with the UN logo for the 60th anniversary of the UDHR and the text of Article 19 of the UDHR.

FARRAR